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DE RUEHGO #0064 0350735
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FM AMEMBASSY RANGOON
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 8619
INFO RUCNASE/ASEAN MEMBER COLLECTIVE
RUEHGG/UN SECURITY COUNCIL COLLECTIVE
RUEHBY/AMEMBASSY CANBERRA 1771
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI 5245
RUEHUL/AMEMBASSY SEOUL 8845
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO 6417
RUEHCHI/AMCONSUL CHIANG MAI 2040
RUEKJCS/DIA WASHDC
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC
RHHMUNA/CDR USPACOM HONOLULU HI
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 2239
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L RANGOON 000064

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DEPT FOR EAP/MLS, DRL, AND IO
PACOM FOR FPA

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PHUM](#) [PINR](#) [BM](#)
SUBJECT: BURMA: THAN SHWE RESURFACES

REF: RANGOON 9

Classified By: P/E Chief Jennifer Harhigh for Reasons 1.4 (b) & (d)

¶1. (C) After a month of speculation about his whereabouts, Burmese Senior General Than Shwe reappeared in Nay Pyi Taw February 3 to accept the credentials of the new Cambodian, Vietnamese, and Chinese Ambassadors to Burma. Official photos of all three ceremonies appear in the February 4 state-run New Light of Myanmar. The Chinese incoming and outgoing defense attaches, who attended the PRC credential ceremony, told us Than Shwe "appeared healthy," although he was still experiencing lower back pain. The February 3 ceremonies for the three Ambassadors took place in the order of their arrival in country, beginning with the Cambodian at 10:00 a.m., the Vietnamese at 10:30 and the Chinese at 11:00.

¶2. (C) Rumors that Than Shwe is gravely ill or dead circulate every few months. In this instance, speculation about his health began in earnest after he failed to attend an annual January 4 Independence Day dinner in Nay Pyi Taw (Reftel). The official explanation given for his no-show was that he had suffered a back injury while visiting a pagoda. We then heard he had collapsed during a briefing on January 14 in Nay Pyi Taw, causing at least one senior figure, LtGen Ye Myint, head of Military Intelligence, to rush there from Rangoon. Vice-Senior General Maung Aye officially hosted the Thai Supreme Commander during his recent visit, further fueling rumors of Than Shwe's imminent demise. Not just yet, but some day we all pass from the scene....

DINGER